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Three Lockdown Poems

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Abstract

Three poems written during the period of “lockdown” in the UK in early 2020. Each poem works in, and responds to, the confluence of the personal, the material, and the socio-political.

Keywords

affect, poetic, material

Lockdown Birthday

Today, we speak about
her birthday on Monday
when we sang to her

they, outside her window
and I, through the screen
of a phone held

by Elsa, whose name
I know, but have never
seen, heard, met

they stood outside,
Elsa held a phone,
we distance-sang

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and, today, she remembers
 how, on her birthday
 we were there

What Did You Do During the Virus?

What did you do during the virus?
 they will ask
 like, way back, when they talked about how
 “your Uncle Derek, you know, he had a good war”

a thwarted mountaineer climbs Everest
 on the stairs of his house
 a 99-year-old completes 100
 laps of his back garden

a champion cyclist mirrors a nurse’s shift
 pedals 12 hours a day over 3 days
 my friend paints her house, another teaches his children,
 another rises at 5 am to read, another is writing a book

so, years on, here it will be –
 worked on handstand, did 8 pull-ups
 plucked new bars of an old song
 and began to break, make, my life

Breaking Up in a Time of Corona: Scaffolding

The scaffolding outside the kitchen
 Was assembled over days, steel pole clamped
 to steel pole, ladders strapped and planks laid,
 until it reached the roof
 five floors up from the road below

Now the virus has scared us all inside
 and the scaffold stands abandoned,
 without purpose except to filter the dangerous world
 outside our home. From within we dismantle
 the frame of our life together, undoing it piece by piece

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Jonathan Wyatt is professor of qualitative inquiry at The University of Edinburgh and Director of the Centre for Creative-Relational Inquiry. His recent book, *Therapy, Stand-up, and the Gesture of Writing: Towards Creative-Relational Inquiry*, published by Routledge, won the 2020 ICQI Qualitative Book Award.